

SOME years ago Mr. R. G. Menzies told me that whenever he came to London he wandered about the streets and was deeply content. "Dickens," he said, "has populated London with so many old friends that I feel I have come home to a reunion."

In emulation of our distinguished kinsmen I wandered in Westminster one day last week and saw a lot of earnest people crowding into Church House. The attraction was Dame Edith Sitwell, who was to speak on the subject of poetry, and the auditorium could not have held a bigger audience if the attraction had been Colonel Nasser or Mr. Liberace.

Dame Edith is at once manly and formidable, an undoubted Olympian who does not despise the groundlings. There was a respectful silence when she assured us that the essence of form is indivisible, that younger poets do not know how to use consonants and that you need not live a good life to be happy. But not all of us will agree with her pronouncement that a poem should be about something. Give us the sound and the sense will look after itself.

A Dominated House

WHILE Dame Edith was holding forth at Church House the gladiators were preparing for the Suez show-down at Westminster. It was the second day of the debate and the Prime Minister, who was below his best form when he opened his oration, was to wind up.

And where was Mr. Macmillan as twilight came upon the Terrace? A political friend tells me that he was in the smoke room chatting with three or four of his friends, in appearance completely unfurled and in the good humour. When, at 3.30, he rose to wind up the debate, he spoke with such mastery of the House that even Aneurin Bevan was subdued to silence.

Every Prime Minister brings something special to his task or he would not hold supreme office. Churchill made history in full view, Attlee reduced debate to committee discussions, Baldwin mesmerised the House with the sound of words and Chamberlain turned it into a board meeting.

Harold Macmillan's contribution is intellect. His mind so dominates the House that Nye Bevan's verbal sensuality faded from scarlet to a modest pink.

A Grim Echo

HOW strange it is to read of the fall of Dietrich and Lippert at Munich for their part in the night of the long knives. When Hitler and his murderers shot Roehm and a

number of his grisly Nazi Queen during the State visit to London.

I was in Berlin at the time, having gone there to attend an arts festival, and the whole city was in the grip of terror. Business men who had taken no part in the Nazi movement

When the Countess left her lovely castle at Tranekaer, on the island of Langeland, to Copenhagen in readiness for the Queen's arrival on Tuesday, she took with her the family jewellery — the diamond tiara and the "naughty pearls." These pearls once belonged to Countess Billie, who some years ago went to St. Petersburg as lady-in-waiting to the future Empress Marie-Fedorovna, who was Danish. The old Tsar Alexander II was determined that his young daughter-in-law should receive his maîtresse en titre, and he tactfully approached Countess Billie to arrange the presentation.

A censored page in the Nazi "Who's Who." The Countess was in a quandary about the streets daily; but to refuse would be afraid to go to their homes. to disobey the Tsar of All the Russians. She arranged a meeting, and when she undid her napkin at dinner that evening, out slipped four enormous Russian pearls.

These, the "naughty pearls," later came into the Ahlefeldt family, and Countess Thea Ahlefeldt-Laurvig will be wearing them at the State banquet for the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at Copenhagen on Tuesday.

Requiem for a Conductor
THERE will be a dramatic moment in the life of London when impresario Gorlinsky presents Verdi's Requiem at the Festival Hall as a memorial to Guido Cantelli, who was killed in an air crash near Paris. Cantelli's last appearance was when he conducted the orchestra and chorus in Verdi's masterpiece in the same hall.

In many ways Cantelli had the musical world at his feet, even though there were some critics who thought that his early promise had not been completely fulfilled. Signor Toscanini had nominated him as his successor at La Scala, and the news of Cantelli's death was kept from the maestro, who himself was at the point of death.

Cantelli was the first

to London after the war. He reception that night, and was unknown to the British public and was filling in for de him. New York acclaimed him. Sabata who was ill, but he proved that he was not only a brilliant conductor, but no mean actor. He was of medium height, but when he took up his baton for Tchaikovsky's Fifth he seemed to stretch upwards until he became almost a towering Muscovite.

He was given a tremendous Canelli pleaded like a small boy to be allowed to stay in. Looking back, it almost seemed

that he had a premonition that his future could be counted in weeks, almost in days.

Royal Screen-writer

IT is not surprising that the Duke of Edinburgh scored a great success when he dined with the British Screen and Television Writers' Association. He has a remarkable quality of associating himself with the better thoughts of those with whom he混gues. When Mr. Frank Launder put forward the

suggestion that screen-writers, like novelists, should be paid on a royalty basis, the guest of honour thoroughly agreed.

"I know what it is," he said, "to endure the agony of staring at the blank page for hours at a time, and for hours before too."

The Duke, already a Fishmonger and a member of the Court of the Fishmongers Company, is now officially a screen-writer, although it is unlikely that he will be able to give very much time to either fish or films. It was the Fishmongers Company that commissioned the controversial portrait by Annigoni, and it is doubtful if the screen-writers will venture into such controversial activities.

Grand Design

ONE has hardly been able to pick up a newspaper during the last couple of weeks without reading about the "Grand Design." But when I ask my friends, "Do you know what the 'Grand Design' was originally?" they make the haziest and most varied guesses.

Ignorant myself, I tried reference books in vain, but I am told that the Grand Design was a plan, attributed by Sully to Henry IV of France, and intended abortively by his assassination, for a great Protestant Union against the Holy Roman Empire. A peculiarly inept and ill-omened eponym for the British tidying-up project which was so roughly handled at Strasbourg last week!

Double Entente

A WELCOME reappearance on the London scene will be made this week by M. René Massigli, French Ambassador to Britain from 1944 to 1955, when he delivers the seventh Stevenson Memorial lecture at the London School of Economics on Tuesday.

This lecture — under the auspices of the L.S.E. and the Royal Institute of International Affairs — on "New Conceptions of French Policy in Tropical Africa" is an unusual occasion; foreign ambassadors rarely find the opportunity publicly to renew their old associations.

A week later, on May 28, another distinguished Frenchman will address a London audience. M. Soustelle, who after being a post-war Governor-General of Algeria and a United Nations delegate at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris, will talk to Chatham,

House members on the Algerian tragedy. This double French attraction helps to emphasise still further the growing rapprochement between the two countries, a process which M. Massigli did much to stimulate.

Attendance at both lectures must add, is by invitation only, but M. Massigli's address will subsequently be published.

Selling for Dollars

THE Dollar Export Council which surely should be named the Dollar Imports Council, tells me that two of America's top marketing experts, Professor Robert Seymour and Mr. Charles Johnson, are about to head off on record conferences with leaders of British industries in many parts of Britain.

These gentlemen have been making a tour of Britain and have formed definite impressions on how to increase British exports to the U.S.A. I know nothing about our visitors, but they could not be more welcome if they were old friends.

There is little doubt that Britain's invasion of the vast American market has been left to individuals and it has lacked the resources which are available to such a campaign. There is an immense goodwill towards Britain in America, but we have never publicised our goods to the extent that is required. It might be a good thing if the President of the Board of Trade kept before him that short poem of infinite wisdom:

He who whispers down a well About the goods he has to sell Will not earn as many dollars As he who climbs a tree and hollers.

People and Words

THE only thing I envy Etienne and Harrobinson for is that they have magnificient schools, but they are also magnificent trade unions."

—Sir Ivor EVANS, Provost of University College, London.

"Every time you get bored you die a little."

—DOLORES DEL RIO.

"It is invariably men — masculine Grunds — who make silly restrictions, conditions about the dress, appearance and deportment of women."

—Mr. J. G. LAURIE, President of the Hairdressing Manufacturers' Association.

"When I was an ordinary citizen, a worker would paint the put down the road for a bus, you can't say that sort of thing when you are Lord Mayor!"

—Sir CULVER WELCH, Lord Mayor of London.

"Reason has never played such a large part in international affairs as emotion."

—EARL RUSSELL, O.M.